

These are some of the crowning achievements of this body, but if you were in Congress back then, that is hardly how they were viewed by some at the time. Back then, the minority party refused to provide even a single vote to pass these laws—not even one. The minority condemned them as partisan tools of the angry, vengeful north; a power grab.

The minority refused to come to the table, so the majority was willing to act alone—act alone—to pass civil rights legislation. It wasn't partisan; it was patriotic. Their actions made our democracy stronger, and they were willing to do what was necessary, including going it alone to defend our freedoms. Today, we feel the same way.

The question now before the Senate is how we will find a path forward on protecting our freedoms in the 21st century. The Members of this Chamber can take inspiration from the great patriots of the past who put country over party, or they can cross their arms and watch as our 240-year-old experiment in democracy falls prey to the specters of authoritarian control.

BUILD BACK BETTER

Madam President, on Build Back Better, it has been a very productive week for Democrats as we inch closer to finalizing an agreement on President Biden's Build Back Better plan.

I want to thank all of my colleagues, especially our committee chairs, the Speaker, the President and his team for their leadership, diligence, and commitment to getting something done.

The progress of this week affirms what we have been saying for months: If we stick together, if we keep working toward a legislative sweet spot, and if we keep our eyes on the ultimate goal of getting something big done for the American people, then we can and will succeed. We are closer to reaching that goal, and we are going to continue working until the job is done.

In the end, Build Back Better is going to be the greatest investment in the American people, in our economy, and in the fight against climate change that we have seen in a long, long time. That is no easy feat, but we remain unshaken in our desire to forge ahead. Let's keep going.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

KENTUCKY VETERANS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday, it was my privilege to welcome a distinguished group of Ken-

tucky veterans from all across the Commonwealth to our Nation's Capitol. Representing every branch of the military, more than 60 Kentuckians who served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam traveled to Washington to visit the memorials built in their honor.

The Honor Flight program, which coordinates these trips, is finally back up and running after the COVID-19 pandemic shut down their operations last year. I couldn't be more thankful for this organization's seamless planning and execution, especially in light of this year's added complications.

The Honor Flight Bluegrass chapter has brought hundreds of veterans to Washington over the years, mirroring the important work of their peer organizations all across the country. Despite the significant logistical and financial hurdles, the Honor Flight program ensures every veteran can travel at no cost to themselves.

I had the opportunity to meet with some of these Kentucky heroes and listen to their incredible stories. Their service spanned generations, continents, and conflicts. But one thread unites them all: a complete dedication to the cause of freedom and a deep love for our great Nation.

As the son of a World War II veteran, I have a special appreciation for these men and women. It was a great honor to stand by their side as they visited the solemn monuments constructed to commemorate their sacrifice. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to those brave servicemembers and to the hard-working Honor Flight organizers and volunteers who made their visit possible.

TERRORISM

Madam President, yesterday also brought a sobering reminder of the dangers a new generation of American servicemembers continue to encounter as they follow in the footsteps of these heroes. U.S. personnel operating in Syria became the latest targets of a drone attack perpetrated by terrorists. Whether the perpetrators turn out to be ISIS or, more likely, loyal Iranian proxies, it is clear that serious threats are growing all across that region.

The terrorists who seek to harm us and the regimes that support them were emboldened—considerably emboldened—by our retreat from Afghanistan. Just this week, the U.S.-designated terrorist and Taliban Interior Minister, Haqqani, praised suicide-bombing Taliban terrorists with American and Afghan blood on their hands and provided—listen to this—cash rewards to their families. They are getting a cash reward for killing Americans. The Taliban also continues to hamper the evacuation of American citizens, Afghans who worked with America, and other vulnerable Afghans who are continuing to be under threat.

Our allies and adversaries alike are wondering whether the Biden administration intends to stand up to those who dare to challenge us or our allies.

They are watching—watching closely—to see if America will blink in the face of the Taliban's defiance or Iran's aggression. I hope the President is prepared to settle this question and deliver on our commitments.

HEALTHCARE

Madam President, now on an entirely different matter, there is little confusion about the devastating economic impact Democrats would bring about by ramming through their reckless taxing-and-spending spree: more taxes, more debt, and more painful inflation.

But this isn't some collection of well-intentioned policies whose pricetag has just gotten dangerously out of control; the policies themselves would mean real pain for American families—case in point: the heavyhanded mandates that would restrict choice and access to affordable, lifesaving healthcare.

Democrats want to ax the private insurance plans that millions of Americans have chosen and prefer. They want to build new Federal health programs and expand the ones that exist today, heaping more than \$550 billion in new expenses on taxpayers to insure less than 4 million more people. Let me say that again. They want to build new Federal health programs and expand the ones that exist today, heaping more than \$550 billion in new expenses—new expenses—on taxpayers. The result: to insure less than 4 million more people.

Here is the truth: The overwhelming majority of Americans today have access to healthcare. Democrats just don't like the private plans that most Americans choose.

Then, there is the plan to heap hundreds of billions of dollars in new programs and huge pools of additional people into a Medicare system that experts say is already—already, right now—dangerously close to insolvency. This is a huge, risky leap toward Medicare for All at the expense of the stability and the security of the actual Medicare system that millions of seniors rely on right now.

Democrats want to pour cold water on America's world-leading medical innovation sector by imposing socialist price caps on prescription medicines. In another example of Democrats' magic math—magic math—the rationale here is apparently that calling something cheaper actually makes it so. Calling something cheaper, they think, actually makes it so.

In reality, research tells us this would mean fewer new treatments and new cures. By one analysis, these price controls would cause up to 20 times—20 times—as much lost life over a decade as the once-in-a-century COVID pandemic already has. I want to say that again. By one analysis, these socialist price controls could cause up to 20 times as much lost life over a decade as the once-in-a-century COVID pandemic already has. Suppressing innovation through drug socialism would literally cost American lives.

Of course, they are planning to leave behind commonsense protections